HOLLYWOOD BABBLe

AUTHOR OF "HOLLYWOOD BABYLON II" AND UNDERGROUND FILMMAKER KENNETH ANGER STRIKES OUT AT THE UNKNOWN, TACKY AND GRUESOME UNDERSIDE OF TINSLE TOWN IN THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW FOR TORSO INTERNATIONAL.

INTERVIEW BY JERRY TILLOTSON
ART BY ALFONSO SABELLI

Did you know that Tallulah Bankhead and Hattie McDaniel once scandalized even the most jaded sophisticates of Hollywood with their hot affair? It's true. "Mammy" of *Gone With the Wind* and the Queen of Camp were lovers.

And did you ever hear that incredible story which swirled around the filming of the 50's classic of troubled youth, *Rebel Without a Cause?* You know, the story about James Dean being so infested with body lice that the director had to drag him to a drug store and force him to scrub down with crabocide?

And how about all those whispers surrounding Carmen Miranda, the Tutti-Frutti Bombshell of the Forties? You know, the rumors about how she was always so full of pep and energy? Maybe it had something to do with the secret compartments in her gigantic wedgies where she stored her supply of cocaine.

All these titallating secrets can be found between the covers of a book that has had Hollywood, and thousands around the U.S.A., talking for months now. The tome is *Hollywood Babylon II* and its author is underground filmmaker and writer, Kenneth Anger. If you adore reading

about the tacky doings and the gruesome underside of Tinsel Town, then Anger's your man.

Discreet, he is not. During an interview, he can cause even the most cynical of writers to gasp: "You mean John Wayne did that?. . .Valentino could not have done that!. . .No! Not Judy. . .or Monroe. . .or Turner. . .or Taylor!"

He also shows you a photograph which features a man who bears a remarkable resemblance to Marlon Brando doing something so scandalous that his editors refused to publish it in *Hollywood Babylon II (HBII).*

"Maybe I can publish it in five years," he said during an exclusive interview with TORSO. "But the editors were afraid we might be sued." When asked if there might be a chance that the man in the snapshot might be someone other than the Academy Award winning actor, Anger retorts: "That *is* Marlon Brando! No question."

The cover of Anger's latest volume of filmdom's best kept secrets—which were often whispered about but seldom discussed aloud—features a cruel picture, taken five years ago, of a grotesquely fat Elizabeth Taylor. A highly unflattering chapter is devoted to Taylor and her weight problem in *HBII.*

Taylor's reaction to this questionable tribute may be assessed by the fact she banned the book from the set of her recently televised TV movie, *Malice in Wonderland*—after spying a technician leafing through the pages of *HBII.*

Although Anger's two books have been called "vicious" and "sensational" by some, one still reads them with the same fascination one would experience while attending a public hanging.

What makes his work different from the countless other movie books spewed out each year is that his research concentrates on long buried, or forgotten scandals. Most of us have never heard of them. No rewriting the Liz 'n' Dick and Marilyn scandals for Anger. Although he does often reprise a well-known murder case or tragedy, he usually brings in fresh facts uncovered during his tireless tracking down of rumors.

"I spend at least four years researching everything I write about and collecting my pictures," says the still-handsome, 52-year-old writer.

And there are those photographs—pictures never before published and which cay say more than thousands of words. Volume Two features gruesome photographs from police files of the butchered girl known as "The Black Dahlia" of the Forties. We've heard about this famous unsolved murder but suddenly there it is—nauseating but fascinating as we study the various parts of her torso strewn over an alleyway.

In both volumes, one studies with fascination the corpse of washed-up alcoholic actress Marie Prevost which has been half-eaten by her pet dog. . .the bleached head of Jayne Mansfield, which was decapitated during a car crash. . .nude shots of Joan Crawford and a still from that stag film, *Bosom Buddies,* which she swore was never made. . .beaver shots of Marilyn Monroe, Jean Harlow, Carmen Miranda.

And there are those unusually chummy pictures of gorgeous Cary Grant during the Thirties with his equally hunky roommate, Randolph Scott. . .both in white shorts, enjoying breakfast together, going to the theatre together, playing ball together Could this *mean* something?

And there is Claudette Colbert sitting between the thighs of Marlene Dietrich who, Anger contends, had a faithful sewing club of mannish women.

Anger spends much time describing how film-folk die. Perhaps the most bizarre death, other than the dog-eaten Marie Prevost was that of the great German director, F.W. Murnau in 1931. Anger writes that one rumor had it that Murnau was in the front seat of his car which was being driven by his handsome 14-year-old Filipino chauffeur. Murnau was going down on the young driver who suddenly climaxed and the car went off the road and both were killed.

The collector of these fascinating secrets bears a huge tattoo across his chest which reads: LUCIFER. This was his nickname when he was in the Navy. He has always been a controversial figure in film circles. I can recall visiting New York in the late Sixties, primarily just to see Anger's classic underground film, *Scorpio Rising.* I still think the way the camera moved over the well-muscled torsos of young men in jeans and leather and boots, the camera work and vivid editing was much more erotic than any of the suck and fuck films being spewed out today.

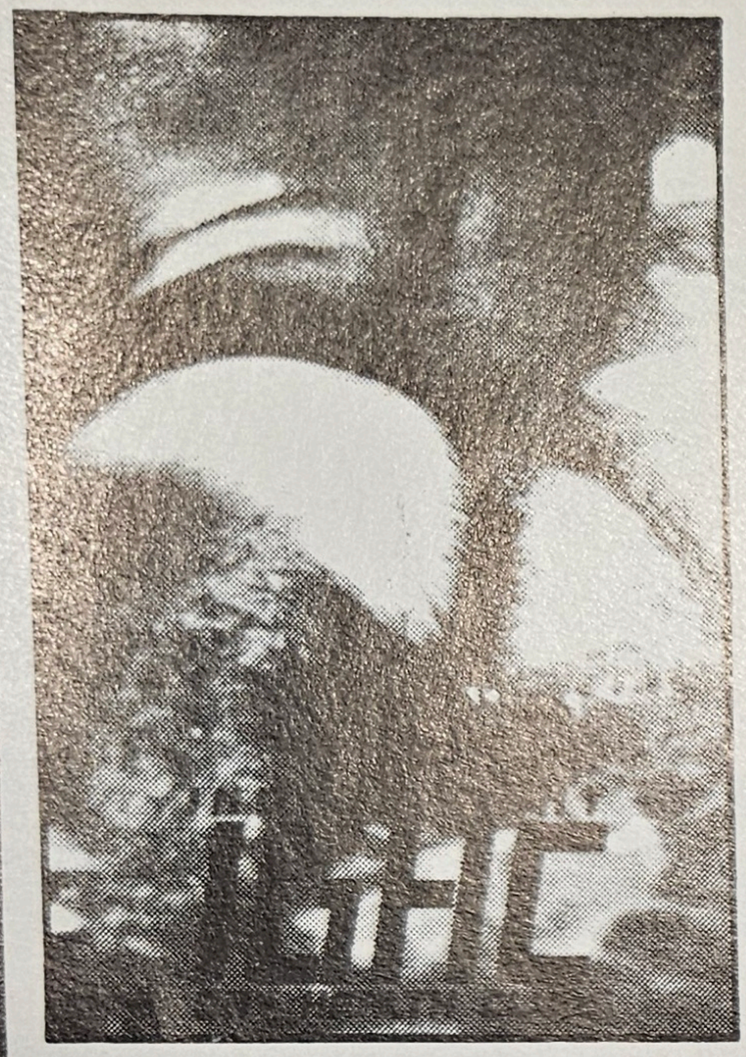
This film, followed by *Fireworks, The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* and *Lucifer Rising,* built up Anger's reputation as a gifted, if eccentric, filmmaker. However, it was *Hollywood Babylon* which brought him general recognition. Originally published in Paris in 1960, it became an instant underground classic. It was reprinted by Dell Publishers in 1975 and thus came immediately to an even more mainstream reader who

Ronald Reagan about to get shafted. *Photograph from Kenneth Anger Collection.*

> *"The camera moved over the well-muscled torsos of young men in jeans and leather and boots; the editing much more erotic than any of the suck and fuck films being spewed out today."*

RELAX

At your local IGHC member facility!



Our 37 Member Facilities Include:

Buffalo, NY	
Morgan's Sauna	*(716) 852-2153*
Chicago, IL	
Unicorn Club	*(312) 929-6080*
Grand Rapids, MI	
Diplomat Health Club	*(616) 452-3754*
Hollywood, CA	
The Hollywood Spa	*(213) 463-5169*
Honolulu, HI	
The Steam Works	*(808) 923-1853*
Indianapolis, IN	
The Body Works	*(317) 635-1837*
N. Hollywood, CA	
The Compound	*(818) 760-6969*
Portland, OR	
Continental Club Baths	*(503) 223-2313*
Reno, NV	
Dave's Club	*(702) 322-4403*
San Diego, CA	
Dave's Club	*(619) 244-9011*
San Jose, CA	
The Watergarden	*(408) 275-1242*
Seattle, WA	
Continental Club Baths	*(206) 322-9715*
Seattle, WA	
Dave's Club	*(206) 623-2045*

For Your 1985 "HANDBOOK OF MEMBER FACILITIES"
Send $1.50 to 303 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, IN, 46204

could find it in the drugstore and supermarket paperback racks.

The sequel appeared in late 1984 and Anger is currently working on a television movie which would combine the two volumes together. Anger's life has always been related to movies, from the time he made his appearance as The Changeling Prince in the 1935 Warner Brothers curiosity, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His cohort was Mickey Rooney who cavorted around in the half-nude as Puck.

He is passionate today in his adoration of the old-time movie stars and doesn't hide his scorn for the "cute little James Dean clones" which populate today's movies.

This is evident in his fourth-story walk-up apartment in upper Manhattan. It is a shrine built to the man he considers the greatest movie star who ever lived. Posters, busts, photographs, memorabilia attest to Anger's veneration of Rodolfo Guglielmi Valentino. The Shiek of the patent-leather hair, bedroom eyes and moist lips.

This silent screen star of extraordinary good looks made a series of films during the Twenties which exploited his superb body. In nearly all of his movies, there was always one scene where the Italian stallion was almost nude. His death in 1926 still abounds with mystery. Was he poisoned by a jealous husband, did he die of syphyllis or did he really expire from peritonitis?

"Valentino was the first, overtly sexual male movie star," Anger states. "There were other goodlooking men in the movies at that time, but none were presented as being purely sensual. Like many Italian men, Valentino was bisexual. I know several men with whom he had affairs with but could really get it on with women, too."

Anger sticks with this theory despite the fact Valentino married two lesbians and reputedly never consummated either of the marriages. He also gifted his "close" friend, silent screen knock-out, Ramon Navarro, with an art deco dildo. This was rammed down his throat in 1968 by two Hollywood hustlers and ended his life.

"Stars in those days were really stars. Since their films had no voices, they were more remote and untouchable than people are today. They were people you dreamt about

"Valentino married two lesbians and reputedly never consummated either of the marriages. He also gifted Ramon Navarro with an art deco dildo which was later found down his throat when two Hollywood hustlers ended his life."

because the public had hardly any contact with them. They had a tremendous magnetism over actors in the talkies. By talking, they became more human."

There are no more Clark Gables, Gary Coopers, Joan Crawfords or Greta Garbos, Anger complains. And even the sudden influx of handsome teenage boys into today's films can't hold a candle to James Dean.

Although Anger devotes an entire chapter to Dean, the late star comes off as someone so psychotic and repulsive that it is difficult to believe the author admires him. But he does.

The chapter, entitled "The Trouble With Jimmy," explicitly lists the troubles: as an admitted gay man, he was also insane. He would throw tantrums on the sets if his suggestions were not followed and he would throw his meals out the windows if he attended a dinner party. In the S&M bars in Hollywood, he was dubbed "The Human Ashtray." This is because he had a penchant for ripping open his shirt and begging patrons to stub out their burning cigarettes onto his body. When the coroner examined Jimmy's corpse following the fatal car crash Sept. 20, 1955, he discovered a "constellation" of kerotoid scars.

"Jimmy may have had crabs," writes Anger, "but he had durable

charisma."

There is something poignant and haunting and constantly fascinating as we read how these scandals destroyed so many lives. Sex and drugs seemed to be the two ingredients which would annihilate a star's life and career overnight.

We read of the popular silent screen star, William Haines, being black-balled by Louis B. Mayer of MGM for having been caught in bed with a sailor. Haines, however, went from being a movie star to an outstanding interior designer.

This same black-balled actor figured in the making of *Gone With the Wind*, writes Anger, but in a most peculiar way. Film historians have always wondered just why George Cukor was fired as director of this motion picture classic. Anger states that during Clark Gable's years as a struggling actor in Hollywood, he allowed himself to be orally serviced by Haines, who happened to be a close friend of George Cukor.

Gable demanded that Cukor be fired—because the mustachioed actor knew he could not work with a homosexual director who knew what had happened between Haines and himself.

During the Roaring Twenties, where one would think anything went, the public seemed to demand that its screen gods and goddesses had to be perfect. Anger writes of the scandal which destroyed the careers and lives of sweet, virginal Mary Miles Minter and Mabel Normand. Both were having affairs with film producer William Desmond Taylor at the time of his murder February 1, 1922. Despite the fact that neither actress was ever charged with his still unsolved death, both were ruined: Mary Miles Minter went into seclusion and grew fat. Mabel Normand died in the early Thirties after her health was destroyed by drugs and scandal.

The first really big scandal which rocked both Hollywood and the world was the 1921 Fatty Arbuckle Murder-Rape Case. Formerly a plumber before being discovered by comedy king Mack Sennett, Fatty had become famous the world over as a lovable, bumbling, endearing fat man comedian. When he signed a $3 million contract with Paramount, he celebrated by throwing a party in a San Francisco hotel. Among those attending was a promiscuous starlet named Virginia Rappe.

Witnesses testified later they saw Fatty and Virginia going off into a bedroom. Later, there were screams and moans. Fatty staggered out, grinning drunkenly. Virginia lay dying on her blood-soaked bed. There were suggestions that Fatty had used a bottle, and later a jagged chunk of ice, to ravish her. Or, he was so heroically endowed that his sexual thrusts ruptured her. After her death, Fatty was tried three times. The first time, the jury was hung. The second two times, he was acquitted. Yet, he was never allowed to appear before the cameras again. He died drunk and broke in a seedy New York hotel in 1931.

In his new collection of scandals, Anger considers the most colorful of them to be the affair between Hattie McDaniel and Tallulah Bankhead.

"Hattie was a very lusty woman. After a bad marriage, she declared: 'I'm through wit de men folk.' She loved to fix fried chicken for Southern belle Tallulah."

There are several tantalizing pictures with provocative tag-lines but nothing else. For instance, beneath a photograph of the cute, bare-chested twins, Bobby and Billy Mauch, who were once hot movie properties, Anger writes: "Closer than close?" Beneath a photograph of ventriloquist Edgar Bergen and his famous puppet, Charlie: "What's a few splinters between friends?" What is the author trying to tell us?

There were several stories which Anger's editors would not allow him to include in *HBII*, he claims. He wanted to write about Frank Sinatra's alleged connections to racketeering. "That man's got such a vindictive streak about him."

One of the most tragic scandals he ever came across was the Frances Farmer tragedy. Called the "new Garbo," she made a string of hits in the late Thirties but her volatile personality and her taste for drugs and booze caused her to have a breakdown. She was committed to a state mental hospital for a number of years, was lobotomized, and died alone in a charity hospital. A grim end, indeed, for a golden-haired woman who many thought would become one of the greatest of all stars.

"Frances was always a borderline psycopath to begin with. If she had a manager who could have handled her with kid gloves, it might have ended up so differently. There was also that political aspect—of her going to Russia and she told movie producers exactly what she thought of them."

He has strong opinions on other big names: Garbo—"She was marvelous but she never had the right scripts." Elizabeth Taylor—"She's no longer a movie star. She's a celebrity personality. It's ludicrous to think of one of the world's most beautiful women portraying Louella Parsons [in *Malice in Wonderland*]."

If he could see one movie over and over again, it would be the silent classic, *Pandora's Box,* starring Louise Brooks, who sank from being the toast of European filmmakers to working at Macy's as a sales clerk and who now lives in seclusion in Rochester, New York.

Most stars today are "forgettable."

Now and then, Anger enjoys a good ole porn movie. He liked especially the gay classic, *Reflections of Youth.*

Would he ever consider playing in an X-rated movie?

"Maybe 25 years ago. But not now."

In the meantime, we will have to wait with bated breath to see where Anger will strike next. Hollywood stars—walk with care!

Zero Mostel caught melon shopping. *Photograph from Kenneth Anger Collection.*